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Making a Difference for California



UC FOOD SAFETY CE UPDATE

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Produce Safety from Purchase to Consumption

Fresh fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthful diet. They provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber to help keep your body healthy. Occasionally, fresh fruits and vegetables can become contaminated with harmful bacteria or viruses, which are also known as pathogens.

Examples of pathogens include: *Salmonella*, *E. coli* 0157:H7, and Hepatitis A. This contamination can occur at any

point from the field to your table.

If eaten, contaminated fruits and vegetables can cause foodborne illness. Common signs of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, and fever. These symptoms usually appear within 12 to 72 hours.

Although foodborne illness can be serious, there are several easy steps you can take to help keep fresh fruits and vegetables safe to eat.

Shopping

When shopping for fresh produce, avoid items that are bruised, damaged or moldy, or that show signs of insect damage. Bruises and cuts may allow pathogens to enter a fruit or vegetable. Damaged fruits and vegetables may also spoil faster. If good-quality fresh



produce is not available, it may be better to choose canned or frozen fruits and vegetables.

When shopping for pre-cut fresh fruits and vegetables, buy only those that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.

Avoid damaged items and open or torn packages.

Continued on Page 2

Shopping (continued)

Check the use-by dates on packages of pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and be sure to choose fresh items and to eat them by this date.

In the shopping cart, keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw beef, poultry, fish and seafood. Place the raw meats in plastic bags. Blood and juice from raw meat

may contain pathogens that could contaminate fresh fruits and vegetables.

At the grocery checkout, bag raw meats separately from fresh fruits and vegetables. Also, keep fresh produce separate from household chemicals in the shopping cart and in the grocery bags.

Storing

Proper storage of fresh produce can affect both quality and safety. Almost all ripe fruits and vegetables **can** be stored in the refrigerator. Once cut, all produce should be kept in the refrigerator. Purchased pre-cut fruits and vegetables should always be refrigerated.

Refrigerator Storing Tips:

- ☑ Do not wash whole fruits and vegetables before storing them.
- ☑ Store all fruits and vegetables in the crisper or produce drawer.
- ☑ Cover cut fruits and vegetables tightly with plastic wrap. Or, store them in sealed plastic bags or clean, air-tight containers.

- ☑ Keep fruits and vegetables separate from raw beef, poultry, fish and seafood in the refrigerator. Place raw meats on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator in a tray or pan. This will prevent blood or juices from dripping onto fresh produce.

Keep your refrigerator set at 40°F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to check.

Preparing

When preparing an produce, always begin with clean hands.

- ☞ Wash **all** produce under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. This includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, or purchased from a grocery store or farmers market.
- ☞ Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, you must still wash it first to remove dirt and bacteria so they are not transferred from the knife to the food.



- ☞ Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers with a clean produce brush.
- ☞ Dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce bacteria.
- ☞ Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits or vegetables after washing and before preparing and/or eating. Discard rotten produce.